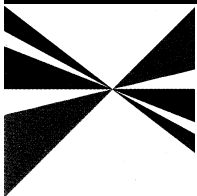


Livable Places PROFILES

MAIN STREET Huntington Beach, CA



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
ASSOCIATION of GOVERNMENTS

1996

Named best big city for business by "California Business Magazine" and the number one place to raise children by Zero Population Growth International, Huntington Beach has revitalized its downtown with public and private investment.



Huntington Beach's Main St. Catches Wave of Mixed-Use Revitalization

Case Study
Acre Size
60

City
Population
190,000

Avg. Minimum & Maximum Temperature
55° → 68°

Key Features
Municipal Pier
Main Street mixed-use area

Huntington Beach's Main Street had declined by the late 1970's into a high crime area that local residents avoided. In 1982, the Downtown Specific Plan was adopted to spark aggressive commercial and residential infill development.

Today, the area is a thriving mixed-use area with residents and visitors enjoying one of the most attractive blends of old and new architecture in Southern California. It is also one of the safest. Commercial rents are now near the top of the market and there are almost no vacancies.



▲ *Outdoor dining at a sidewalk cafe.*



Wide sidewalks invite shoppers to spend time in the area.



A road full of bikes is a common scene on Main Street.



The post office is convenient for pedestrians and cyclists.



Multi-family housing development.

Public / Private Investment

Public investment included \$13 million for the Main Promenade parking structure, \$12 million for rebuilding the pier and \$1.4 million in Main Street improvements. Some additional project financing and property acquisition assistance has resulted in more than \$200 million of private investment in the area.

Special Features and Events

With the ocean, beach and the municipal pier, Main Street is a natural draw for local residents and visitors. The city sponsors more than 70 special events and activities in the area, ranging from internationally recognized surfing and volleyball contests to local arts and crafts festivals, farmers' markets and holiday festivals.

The Main Street downtown also features the Huntington Beach Art Center, the International Surfing Museum, and the Main Street Library Branch. For recreation, there is the City Gym and Pool and the Rodgers Senior Center.

Main Street has wide sidewalks and attractive street amenities, including fountains, decorative paving, seating walls, public plazas and outdoor dining. The area has trails and facilities that encourage jogging, bicycling, rollerblading, volleyball, surfing, body boarding, kite flying, fishing and, of course, walking.

Future Plans

The city's future plans include completing Ruby's Restaurant and other buildings on the newly reconstructed pier, development of the Pier Plaza with its grassy area, amphitheater and people plaza as well as the completion of Duke's Surf City Restaurant at the foot of the pier. The South Beach Master Plan calls for new restrooms and showers as well as improved bicycle and pedestrian trails and enhanced lighting, parking and landscaping.

Lessons Learned

Citizen participation is key to success. So is patience. Revitalization doesn't occur overnight. Create a vision, be clear and concise about what you achieve. Update the plan to accomplish your long-term goals.



The Local Government Commission and the Center for Livable Communities are EPA Transportation Partners.

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An aerial view of the Huntington Beach pier which extends the pedestrian-oriented focus of Main Street.



Enjoying a bike ride on a wide, sunny sidewalk.

Bringing Back Main Street

Once a thriving beach downtown for a small beach community, Main Street by the 1970's was no longer the center of community life. New shopping areas in the growing city left Main Street with empty stores and declining property values. Drug dealing and prostitution gave the area a reputation for high crime.

In 1982, the Downtown Specific Plan was adopted, and a redevelopment Project Area was established for the area around Main Street and the pier. That provided the original blueprint, modified five times since, for an aggressive program of public improvements as well as commercial and residential development and rehabilitation. For the first five years of the plan, a project area committee of local residents and businesspeople advised the city on implementation. Recently, the city held a year of bimonthly subcommittee hearings to prepare the "Village Concept," the latest version of the vision for the area.

Transportation and Access

The area has excellent auto access from two state highways and nearly 2,000 spaces in the downtown area, more than half of them in parking structures. In addition to regional and local bus service, there is heavy use of bicycles, which is encouraged by numerous bike racks conveniently located throughout the area. A high level of pedestrian amenities encourages not only walking, but jogging, rollerblading and skate boarding.

Main St. Huntington Beach

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Mixed-use on Main Street leads to bustling stores for business owners and opportunities to browse, stroll and just hang out.

Mix of Uses

The area includes 250,000 square feet of retail space both at the ground and second levels, much of it oriented to beach visitors. There are movie theaters and a large array of restaurants and cafes, including ample outdoor dining. New high-density apartment and condominium projects have been built adjacent to the commercial area. Established single-family and multi-family neighborhoods are within easy walking distance. The beach and pier provide a wide-range of recreational uses, including swimming, sunbathing, surfing, volleyball and fishing. The area also features a post office, library and cultural institutions.



The well-lighted pier attracts a crowd day and night.

Reasons for Success

The setting next to the beach and rebuilt pier is a prime advantage. There is also an adjacent residential population base. Public transit and the crossing of Pacific Coast Highway with Beach Blvd. (State Highway 39) provide regional access. However, large-scale public and private investment was crucial to the success of the area. Convenient parking, outdoor dining, an attractive pedestrian atmosphere, unique businesses, a strong base of adjacent residential population and important civic uses all combine to make the downtown come alive during the day and evenings.



Retail areas are pedestrian-friendly and well-landscaped.